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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

BY

ISAAC BURTON BUSHMAN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

PRINTMAKING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Science = Magik (Final Visual Presentation)

Submitted by Isaac Burton Bushman in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Fine Arts.



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NAME OF AUTHOR: ISAAC BURTON BUSHMAN

TITLE OF THESIS: FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION – “SCIENCE = MAGIK”

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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections,
University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
After the Ending I	2006	Photolitho, Drypoint, Screenprint	100 x 100 cm
After the Ending II	2006	Photolitho, Drypoint Screenprint	100 x 100 cm
Higher Than a Mountain II	2006	Photolitho, Drypoint Etching, and Screenprint	76.2 x 76.2 cm

We live in a fast-paced world of moving images where most of us suffer from *Attention Deficit Disorder*. Technology has brought us video, interactive media, and virtual reality. Why work in media other than these? My belief is there is a desire in society to look for permanence. There is a desire to spend time with something that holds still, something we can look at over and over again. We need something that helps us discover new things so that we can feel familiarity and enjoy the object's beauty, shapes and textures. I have always been interested in the physical and the spiritual, particularly in that tenuous place where the body and soul connect. While I feel that this original interest remains in my work, I have developed a fascination for the relationship between science and magik through research and investigation of images and texts. Science, as I understand it, is a way in which we categorize and obtain empirical knowledge. *Magik* and the supernatural are phenomena which are not observable by normal senses and are beyond measurement. I use the alternate spelling of magic here because I want to avoid the modern idea of magic and illusion, and instead bring to mind the archaic idea of magik: the hermetic order, alchemy, and questions about belief and faith. In my work the language of science has a precise and seemingly rational quality that contrasts with the language of magik which is chaotic and full of gesture and drips. I am trying to bring these two languages together to pose questions about the nature and relationship between science and magik.

The literary genre of magical realism describes magik in the real world as something natural and everyday. Using this definition, the only difference between magik and science is in the perception of the viewer. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the character José Arcadio Buendía is often mesmerized by science that the gypsies present as magik. In another example Remedios, the great granddaughter of José Arcadio Buendía, is folding laundry one morning and ascends into the sky accompanied by a host of butterflies never to be seen again. The townsfolk do not even think twice about such a remarkable event. Marquez brings up the question: Are science and magik mutually exclusive, or can they inhabit the same place in our lives?

I have always identified with the Abstract-Expressionists, both in America and Europe, particularly Antoni Tàpies, Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock. I love the drips,

intuitive gestural mark-making and chance procedure in the language of Abstract-Expressionism. Mark Rothko has influenced me in a large part because of his concern with the spiritual aspect of his paintings. I admire Pollock and the language of painting that he introduced. I love the act of throwing paint and letting it drip, run and take on a life of its own. Above all artists Antoni Tàpies has influenced me the most. I admire his playful compositions, his attention to surface and his ability to have a painting balance on the hinge of a few well placed marks. Another artist that has made a contribution to my artistic sense is Jean-Michel Basquiat. I identify with his melding of Abstract-Expressionism with a popular culture aesthetic, his combination of the high and low, and his crude child-like drawings mingled with high art language.

I also studied street graffiti from textual sources and photographically documented local examples; in particular I focused on tags. Tags are a name or word scrawled quickly by a graffiti artist. I was intrigued to discover that tags have a physical and spiritual aspect. The main physical aspect of these tags is the result of quickly writing the tag and the fluid hoops and loops recorded in muscle memory. The spiritual aspect of tagging resides in the graffiti artist's statement: I am here and I exist. Influenced by these investigations, I began to construct intricate wire sculptures loosely based on the structures found in tags, Asian calligraphy, and my own calligraphic instincts. As the wire sculptures were developing, I photographed and transferred the images on to plates using various forms of printmaking magik.

The circuitous path of making sculpture, drawing and printing, is integral to my process of creation. At each step I gain an insight into the next medium. I enjoy making art without an end goal in mind, but rather to acting and reacting to the image at each new step of the image making process. Learning new techniques was valuable, but more importantly I learned lessons about my own thought process and about the invaluable ideas of how science and magik interact.

University of Alberta
Department of Art and Design
Final Visual Presentation for the degree of **Master of Fine Arts**

Ike Bushman Printmaking 2006

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